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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RABAT 000212

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA. NEA/PI, NEA/MAG, INL/AAE AND DRL/NESCA

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [SNAR](#) [PTER](#) [PBTS](#) [KMPI](#) [AG](#) [IR](#) [WI](#) [MO](#) [US](#)
SUBJECT: CHARGE AND MFA SECRETARY GENERAL DISCUSS FORUM FOR
THE FUTURE, HUMAN RIGHTS, WESTERN SAHARA, MIDDLE EAST AND
WEST AFRICA

REF: A. STATE 020919
[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 0630

Classified By: CDA Robert P. Jackson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Ministry of Foreign Affairs Secretary General Amrani told Charge March 17 that Morocco believes it is vital that the Secretary attend the Sixth Forum for the Future meeting this fall. The Government of Morocco (GOM) takes our concerns about a deteriorating human rights environment in Western Sahara very seriously and is ready for a fifth round of talks on Western Sahara -- with Algeria as a full participant. Amrani hoped that the Iranians would see Morocco,s decision to sever ties as a message to reduce its threat to the Arab World. He expressed concern that Israel,s commitment to peace with the Palestinians would falter, despite Moroccan engagement last year. Amrani indicated that Iraq is not a GOM priority. He reiterated Morocco,s concern about the growth of narcotics and terrorist networks throughout West Africa, especially in Mauritania, Mali and Guinea-Bissau. End summary.

Sixth Forum for the Future

[1](#)2. (SBU) Charge met with Ambassador Youssef Amrani, the Secretary General (number two) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation (MFA) on March 17. Amrani informed Charge that the dates for the Future Coordinating Meeting for the Sixth Forum for the Future have shifted again)- from March 27 to April 2. Charge noted that the USG feels strongly that a parallel civil society forum is needed, and Amrani indicated that he would make sure that would be on the agenda for the coordinating meeting, which would include the Governments of Morocco, Italy and the United States, as well as No Peace without Justice and the Moroccan Organization for Human Rights (OMDH). Amrani, who coordinated the First Forum here with Secretary Powell, stressed how important Secretary Clinton,s participation would be in the Forum for the Future.

U.S.-Morocco Relations

[1](#)3. (C) Asked for an assessment of bilateral relations, Charge characterized them as excellent and noted that Ambassador Mekouar had just met Deputy Secretary Steinberg. Charge added that there were meetings on the Free Trade Agreement this week and the planting of the first fruit trees under the Millennium Challenge Account Compact this month. Charge also noted that a number of official visitors are due in Morocco this month and next, including Virginia Governor Timothy Kaine, Assistant U.S. Trade Representative for Europe

and the Middle East Christopher Wilson, Members of Congress, and Deputy Under Secretary of the Air Force for International Affairs Bruce Lemkin.

Western Sahara and Algeria

¶4. (C) Amrani noted that he hoped U.S. support for Morocco's autonomy plan would be unwavering, and Charge replied that while the Administration had not finalized its views, we still do not believe that an independent Western Sahara could be a viable country. Charge took the opportunity to press our concern that respect for human rights in Western Sahara has deteriorated in the last two months, and Amrani took the point seriously enough that he called in a note taker to write down that point as a follow-up item.

¶5. (C) Amrani said that the GOM had been pleased with the February visit of Ambassador Christopher Ross, the UN Secretary General's Personal Envoy for Western Sahara. Morocco is prepared to participate in a fifth round of talks in Manhasset, but wants Algeria to be a full party rather than an observer. Amrani felt that a fifth round before the end of April would not only be unrealistic but unproductive. Asked if he had any news about Algerian Ambassador Belkeir, Amrani said he did not.

Iran, Iraq, Israel, Syria and the Arab League

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¶6. (C) Amrani asked Charge how the USG had reacted to the GOM's decision to break diplomatic relations with Iran, and Charge said he found it ironic that Morocco was breaking relations as we were reaching out to Iran and Syria. Charge added that we remain very concerned about Iran's nuclear ambitions and its meddling in neighboring countries and hope that we can work with Morocco and other partners to make Iran a more constructive international player. Amrani opined that Morocco's decision to sever relations may give the Iranians pause and cause them to rethink their relations with the Arab world.

¶7. (C) Charge asked if Morocco would reinforce its ties with Iraq, and Amrani, speaking candidly, said Iraq is simply not a priority for Morocco. However, Iraq would be invited to the Forum for the Future. (Note: Morocco is also reviewing forgiving Iraqi debt. End note.)

¶8. (C) Amrani expressed disappointment with the Israeli election results. Noting that senior Israeli officials had visited Morocco three times in 2008, Amrani said he saw little current will in Israel to achieve a lasting peace with the Palestinians.

Mauritania, Mali and Guinea-Bissau

¶9. (C) Finally, Charge noted that the Mauritanian opposition had recently spent a week in Rabat and that Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi had just visited Nouakchott. Jumping in, Amrani said Qadhafi changes his mind from one day to the next. Amrani averred that fair and transparent elections on June 6 are not plausible. However, he asserted that Morocco and the United States need to focus not only on democracy in Mauritania but also on narcotics trafficking and terrorism. He said we need to be very sensitive to the growth of narcotics and terrorist networks throughout West Africa, especially in Mauritania, Mali and Guinea-Bissau. Amrani concluded the meeting by warning that the kind of instability we have seen in Guinea-Bissau could spread.

Comment

¶10. (C) As always, Amrani was candid. The GOM clearly wants the Secretary at the Forum for the Future, seeing her presence as a key signal of support. He took our concern about human rights very seriously. The GOM remains desirous of working with us on the full range of regional issues but seems increasingly concerned about the Sahel and the growth in regional narcotics trafficking. End comment.

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Jackson